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Financing of the United Nations Observer Mission in Angola

Report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions

1. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has considered the report of the Secretary-General (A/52/799) on revised budgetary requirements for the United Nations Observer Mission in Angola (MONUA) for the period from 1 July 1997 to 30 June 1998. The General Assembly, by its resolution 52/8 of 31 October 1997 had appropriated $155,000,000 gross ($150,371,600 net) for the operation until 30 June 1998. This amount covered the requirement for 170 military troops as of January 1998, 470 civilian personnel as of May 1998, 86 military observers as of December 1997 and 345 civilian police as of October 1996. The Advisory Committee met with representatives of the Secretary-General, who provided additional information.

2. The present revised budgetary requirements, submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution 1149 (1998) of 27 January 1998, by which the Council decided to extend the mandate of MONUA until 30 April 1998, reflect an increase of $25,689,000 gross ($26,058,600 net) for a total revised estimate of $180,689,000 gross ($176,430,200 net) for the same period (1 July 1997 to 30 June 1998). Among the items covered by the increased amount are requirements for an additional 785 troops, 4 military observers and 107 additional civilian personnel; there is no change in the number of civilian police. The total personnel establishment is thus 955 contingent personnel, 90 military observers, 345 civilian police and 577 civilian personnel (281 international staff, 225 locally recruited staff and 71 United Nations Volunteers). As indicated in paragraph 10 of the Secretary-General's report, the estimate provides for the phased repatriation of 148 military observers and 2,731 military contingent personnel, and the emplacement of 57 civilian police observers.

3. The additional resources requested are also for "the completion of the *in situ* registration and disarmament of some 6,000 UNITA (União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola) personnel who were not previously reported to the United Nations (see A/52/799, para. 9). In this connection, the Advisory Committee notes from the Secretary-General's report contained in document A/52/385 (para. 15) that "recurrent costs under air operations and commercial communications take into account related requirements for the verification and demobilization, *in situ*, of some 6,000 personnel of the União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola (UNITA)."

4. The Advisory Committee notes from annex I to the Secretary-General's report on the revised cost estimates (A/52/799) that the bulk of the $25.7 million in additional resources requested are for military personnel costs ($15.4 million); other significant elements are: $3.4 million for air operations; $4.3 million for supplies and services; and $2.1 million for air and surface freight.

5. Of the $155 million already appropriated, the Advisory Committee was informed that $139.6 million had already been allotted for the period ending on 30 April 1998 and

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that, of the amount allotted, $56 million had been disbursed and $46.4 million had been committed as at 31 January. The Committee was also informed that, for the troops that had been retained (see A/52/799, annex II.D, para.4), no obligations for troop reimbursement had been made; however, expenditure and obligations on other items, such as rations, had been incurred.

6. The Advisory Committee notes from annex I to the Secretary-General's report (A/52/799)that the revised estimates for civilian personnel costs show a reduction of $335,700 from $33,778,800 to $33,443,100. The Advisory Committee also notes from paragraph 14 of annex II.D to the same report that, while the proposed number of posts at maintenance level had increased, the revised cost estimate reflected a decrease in requirements, owing to the fact that it was based on actual recorded expenditure for the period from 1 July to 31 December 1997; the estimate for the period from 1 January to 30 June 1998 is based on standard salary costs and full incumbency of posts. Given the fact that no vacancy factor has been taken into account in the budget estimates for this item, and also based on past experience, which has shown that recruitment for all the positions rarely takes place as planned, the Committee doubts whether all of the resources requested would be utilized.

7. With regard to estimates for air operations, the Advisory Committee notes from annex I to the Secretary-General's report that the revised estimates envisage an increase of $3,404,600 over the original estimate of $21,828,800. The Committee notes from paragraph 36 of annex II.D to the Secretary-General's report that part of the increase was owing to an additional requirement of 168 block hours for hire/charter costs for the seven MI-8 helicopters. With regard to hire/charter costs for fixed-wing aircraft, the Advisory Committee was informed that the additional costs are owing to 744 additional hours planned, as well as to a change in the configuration of the aircraft establishment; the Antonov AN-32 aircraft which had been operating from July to October 1997 was replaced by two Lockheed L-100s. This resulted in a change of contract effective 16 October 1997 for the Lockheed aircraft and a consequent change in the cost per hour.

8. The Advisory Committee believes that the revised cost estimates for air operations show an increase mainly because additional flying hours have been estimated. However, experience had shown that there is consistent underexpenditure against this item, as less hours are utilized than planned. The Advisory Committee requested, and was provided with, information regarding flight hours planned and utilized during the period from 1 July 1997 to 31 January 1998. The information showed that, of the 2,058 hours planned for helicopter operations, 153 hours remained unutilized and, with regard to fixed-wing aircraft, of the 8,184 hours planned, 884 hours remained unutilized. The Advisory Committee therefore believes that there is a potential for savings in air operations for the period ending on 30 June 1998.

9. The estimates for supplies and services show an increase of $4,251,300 over the approved estimates of $19,553,800. The increase includes an additional $3,527,300 for contractual services, in addition to the $14,960,100 already budgeted for and reflected in annex I to the Secretary-General's report. As indicated in paragraph 57 of annex II.D to the Secretary-General's report, provision in the original budget had been estimated at $750.000 per month for the period from 19 January to 30 June 1998, pending the awarding of a new contract. The revised cost estimate is based on actual recorded expenditure until 31 December 1997 and projected requirements at an average cost of $1,350,270 per month. Effective 19 January 1998, a new support service contract has been awarded for a one-year period, subject to renewal of the mandate of MONUA. This contract has a total ceiling cost of $16,192,394, or a monthly average cost of $1,349,366. On inquiry, the Committee was informed that the current contract is based on the provision of services, instead of manpower, as in the previous contract. The Committee inquired, but was not able to ascertain, how the Administration was able to determine that for the next 12-month period, the level of the services provided by the contractor would cost $1.3 million per month. The Advisory Committee recommends that steps be taken to monitor and manage the contract carefully, with a view to reducing costs.

10. As indicated in paragraph 50 of annex II.D to the Secretary-General's report, the original cost estimate for commercial communications was based on the assumption that the installation of VSAT systems would be completed by 1 November 1997. However, owing to delays in the delivery of the equipment, which was rescheduled to arrive by 1 February 1998, the Mission had to rely on the prolonged use of more expensive INMARSAT communications. On inquiry, representatives of the Secretary-General attempted to explain that, since the VSAT equipment was not off-the-shelf and had to be custom-made for the Mission's requirements, a three-month delay was not abnormal. The Committee believes that, given the fact that the Administration was aware of the situation, including knowledge of the capacity of the vendor, the cost estimates for the equipment should have been based on delivery in February 1998 and not November 1997. The Advisory

Committee cites this as an example of poor planning and a deficiency in the procurement process.

11. On the basis of its views and observations in the paragraphs above, the Advisory Committee recommends that, of the $25,689,000 gross requested by the Secretary-General, an additional amount of $20 million gross for the maintenance of MONUA for the period from 1 July 1997 to 30 June 1998 be appropriated by the General Assembly; the Committee is of the opinion that this amount should cover, on a priority basis, the requirement of $15.4 million for additional military personnel. The total amount that would be appropriated for the maintenance of the Mission for the period from 1 July 1997 to 30 June 1998 would thus be $175 million gross.

12. The Advisory Committee draws the attention of the General Assembly to the fact that the financial performance report for the period from 1 July 1996 to 30 June 1997 of the Mission (A/52/385/Add.1) shows an unencumbered balance of $3,564,300 gross ($1,999,400 net). In this connection, the Committee will submit in due course its comments and observations to the General Assembly on the financial performance of peacekeeping operations and the cost estimates for the period from 1 July 1998 to 30 June 1999.

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SECURITY COUNCIL
Fifty-third year

THE SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL PEACE AND SECURITY

Report of the Secretary-General

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to paragraph 19 of General Assembly resolution 52/211 B of 19 December 1997, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report to it every three months during its fifty-second session on the progress of the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan (UNSMA). The present report, which covers developments since the submission of the report of the Secretary-General of 14 November 1997 (A/52/682-S/1997/894), is also submitted in response to requests by the Security Council for regular information on the main developments in Afghanistan.

2. On 29 December 1997, Mr. Norbert H. Holl completed his assignment as Head of UNSMA. Mr. James C. Ngobi, Deputy Head of UNSMA, has since that time directed UNSMA activities on the ground as its Acting Head. Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi will continue to serve as my Special Envoy for Afghanistan, while also carrying out other functions for the United Nations at my request from time to time. Together with the Department of Political Affairs, he will continue to oversee and guide the activities of UNSMA, including its coordination of and cooperation in humanitarian and other United Nations activities in Afghanistan. He will also undertake diplomatic initiatives, as appropriate, aimed at bringing peace to Afghanistan. I have asked him to pay special attention to diplomatic contacts with the Governments of countries that have influence with Afghan factions and parties, in particular those with common borders with Afghanistan. Mr. Brahimi is scheduled to visit the region soon to discuss with the Afghan parties and the Governments of the immediate neighbours of Afghanistan the current situation and the prospects for the future.

II. ACTIVITIES OF THE SPECIAL MISSION

3. As mandated by the General Assembly in its resolution 52/211 B, UNSMA continued its efforts to facilitate national reconciliation and reconstruction in Afghanistan and explored opportunities for bringing the factions together and starting a dialogue. One example of this was the effort by UNSMA to build a political dialogue on the agreements reached by several of the factions to exchange prisoners of war. Unfortunately, this effort was frustrated when disputes arose between the Taliban and General Abdul Rashid Dostum, resulting in the de facto detention of General Dostum's negotiator. The details of the prisoner exchanges are described in section III of the present report.

4. UNSMA held a round of meetings in January and February 1998 with leaders of the Taliban and the Northern Alliance. The purpose was to test the climate for peace talks, either through the Taliban-proposed council of ulema (religious scholars) or through a separate initiative. While both sides stated their willingness to cooperate in establishing an ulema council, two Northern Alliance leaders urged the United Nations to proceed with its own initiative to convene an intra-Afghan meeting at a neutral venue. The developments concerning the ulema proposal are also described in section III.

5. UNSMA made special efforts to broaden its consultations with a wide variety of Afghan and other influential individuals and groups in Pakistan. These consultations included meetings with non-partisan Afghans advancing a number of their own peace proposals, including the organization of a loya jirgah (grand assembly). UNSMA made clear that all serious ideas were welcome to the extent that they could contribute to a peaceful settlement of the country's civil strife.

6. In December 1997 and January 1998, the Special Mission expended considerable time and effort in responding to allegations of human rights violations by the Afghan belligerents, particularly in northern Afghanistan. Since some of these alleged violations had occurred in remote areas of northern and north-western Afghanistan, this took inordinate amounts of time and logistical effort. An UNSMA officer accompanied Mr. Choong-Hyun Paik, Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights for Afghanistan, during his mission from 30 November to 13 December 1997 to Afghanistan. Section IV of the present report focuses on the allegations of mass killings and measures taken thus far by the United Nations in response to them.

III. RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN AFGHANISTAN

7. UNSMA continued to monitor closely the military and political developments in and around Afghanistan throughout the reporting period. The humanitarian situation has been monitored by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance to Afghanistan.

A. Military situation

8. The military situation remained stalemated, with occasional flare-ups of fighting along the front lines between the Taliban and the factions belonging to the Northern Alliance. The continued fighting has not produced any significant changes in the front lines, but it has caused further destruction, deaths, injuries and internal displacement of large numbers of people. The predominantly Pushtoon Taliban continued to hold approximately two thirds of the country's territory in the south, south-west and south-east, while the mostly Uzbek, Tajik and Hazara Northern Alliance remained in control of most territories north of the Hindu Kush mountains.

9. On 15 December 1997, a three-pronged Taliban force crossed the then-existing front line near Bala Murghab in the north-western province of Badghis and penetrated into the southern part of Faryab Province, a stronghold of the Northern Alliance to the north-east of Badghis Province. Capturing the predominately Uzbek and Turkmen villages along the invasion routes, the Taliban forces occupied the district capital of Qaisar in southern Faryab for two weeks until they were repulsed at Kezel Kota pass and eventually expelled from the area by forces loyal to General Dostum.

10. Fighting continued in other areas, in particular along the front line 20 to 25 kilometres north of Kabul, where forces of the Taliban and those of Commander Ahmad Shah Massoud regularly exchanged artillery and rocket fire. On 3 and 4 February 1998, after a four-month lull in attacks on the capital, heavy barrages of rockets struck Kabul City and its airport from the north. One rocket narrowly missed a crowded housing area.

11. The two forces also clashed in December and early January in the Tagab district of Kapisa Province to the east of Kabul.

12. The north-eastern province of Kunduz remained under Taliban control, despite repeated attempts by the Northern Alliance to dislodge them. Clashes took place at Bangi, in the eastern part of Kunduz, between Massoud forces and the Taliban, and in Baghlan to the south of Kunduz between the Taliban and forces loyal to General Dostum. On 9 February, Taliban bombing raids hit Taloqan, the capital of Takhar Province to the east of Kunduz, killing 17 persons and damaging the airport.

13. Elsewhere, fighting between the Taliban and the Hezb-i-Wahdat broke out on 20 December at Qarabagh to the south-west of Kabul. The clashes followed the Taliban's blockade against United Nations food shipments from Ghazni to Bamyan and other food-deficit regions in central Afghanistan. The Taliban mounted several air raids on Bamyan in January.

B. Political situation

14. Afghanistan remained in political deadlock throughout the reporting period. Foreign military assistance continued to pour into the country, inhibiting all peacemaking efforts by fuelling the war machines of the Northern Alliance and the Taliban. Despite their rhetorical support for the United Nations and a

negotiated settlement, neither side appeared ready to abandon the military option.

15. War weariness continues to erode support for the war, particularly in rural areas. Both in the Taliban- and the Northern Alliance-controlled areas there were reports of resistance to recruitment for military duty, as well as internal friction resulting from factional rivalry.

16. General Dostum returned from exile in Turkey in September and slowly re-established himself as the leader of the Uzbek Jumbesh Party. This ultimately led General Abdul Malik to flee the country and seek refuge in the Islamic Republic of Iran in December 1997. Tension has continued, however, in Mazar-i-Sharif where the factions of the Northern Alliance partitioned the city into separate control zones. Efforts among the Northern Alliance leaders to resolve their differences have been partially successful.

17. A potential avenue for dialogue between the two sides was the initiation of mutual prisoner-of-war exchanges during November and December 1997. General Dostum started the process in late November with a unilateral release of nearly 200 prisoners from the Sherberghan jail, following his capture of the city from General Malik. Subsequently, other exchanges were initiated and effected with the assistance of UNSMA, at the request of General Dostum's Jumbesh Party, and with the cooperation of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). Several high-ranking Taliban prisoners, including Mullah Abdul Razzak, former Governor of Herat, were freed or allowed to escape, following General Malik's departure.

18. Unfortunately, however, the prisoner exchanges ran into trouble by the end of December 1997, with each side accusing the other of bad faith. A casualty of this unhappy situation is Mullah Abdul Baqi Turkestani, a representative of General Dostum who played a major part in the prisoner release negotiations with the Taliban only to end up as a detainee himself in Kandahar. UNSMA efforts to secure his release have not been successful so far.

19. However, a new initiative launched by Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif of Pakistan revived hopes for a negotiated settlement. During his visit to Tehran for the eighth session of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), held from 9 to 11 December, Mr. Sharif met with Northern Alliance President Rabbani. In a well-publicized move, he subsequently invited Mr. Rabbani to visit Islamabad. On 23 December, the Jamiat-i-Islami leader arrived in Pakistan from Mazar-i-Sharif for a week-long visit. Accompanied by representatives of the other four Northern Alliance parties, Mr. Rabbani held a series of talks in Islamabad. However, the Taliban, who apparently opposed the Pakistani initiative, did not attend the meetings or accept the agreement reached between Mr. Sharif and Mr. Rabbani for an intra-Afghan dialogue among political leaders. Instead, they reiterated their own proposal to convene a council of ulema, who would be appointed by both sides. At the end of his stay in Pakistan, Mr. Rabbani announced his agreement to the Taliban-proposed ulema meeting as a first step towards more direct negotiations between the Taliban and the Northern Alliance. Mr. Rabbani also appealed for a ceasefire to be observed by all sides during the holy month of Ramadan. A Taliban spokesman rejected the offer.

20. On 6 February, the Northern Alliance submitted to the Taliban, through the Government of Pakistan, a list containing the names of 45 ulema. On 12 February, the Taliban, who were yet to produce their own list, declared that the Northern Alliance list was "unacceptable" because some of the people in the list did not qualify as ulema in the view of the Taliban and also because the Northern Alliance had failed to give "an assurance that they will accept to abide by whatever decisions are taken by the ulema meeting".

21. On the regional front, a new spirit of cooperation between Pakistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran on Afghanistan provides a potentially more promising prospect. At the eighth session of OIC in Tehran, Prime Minister Sharif and Iranian President Mohammed Khatami agreed to work together for a peaceful solution to the Afghan conflict. As evidence of such a new spirit of cooperation, the two Governments co-sponsored the OIC resolution on Afghanistan, calling for an end to foreign arms shipments to the belligerent factions, a ceasefire and an intra-Afghan dialogue. The meeting of minds of the two leaders raised hopes that Pakistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran could engage in genuine cooperation to end the long-lasting civil war in Afghanistan. At the OIC summit, Crown Prince Abdullah bin Abdul-Aziz of Saudi Arabia exchanged views on Afghanistan with both President Mohammed Khatami of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Sayed Ali Khamenei. Crown Prince Abdullah also met Mr. Rabbani.

22. In my statement at the OIC summit on 9 December, I expressed deep concern about the prolonged civil war in Afghanistan, which had defied repeated international efforts for peace and taken a heavy toll on the Afghan people in terms of unspeakable human suffering. I stressed that any genuine peace process must begin with a complete ceasefire and the cessation of the continued arms supply to Afghanistan, which, together with the inability of Afghan leaders to rise above their narrow factional interests, had rendered diplomatic initiatives virtually irrelevant.

23. My Special Envoy, Lakhdar Brahimi, visited Saudi Arabia between 17 and 25 January 1998 for consultations with Saudi officials and the OIC secretariat, as well as with dignitaries visiting the country during the holy month of Ramadan. He met with Crown Prince Abdullah, Foreign Minister Prince Saud al-Faisal, and Director of Intelligence Prince Turki al-Faisal. On 24 January, the Special Envoy was received by Prime Minister Sharif of Pakistan in Mecca. The Prime Minister explained that his initiative signalled a new Pakistani policy towards Afghanistan and reaffirmed his country's support for the United Nations peacemaking efforts in Afghanistan.

24. While in Saudi Arabia, Mr. Brahimi met Mullah Mohamed Rabbani, Chairman of the Taliban supreme shura in Kabul. He also had talks with OIC Secretary-General Azzedine Laraki on the Afghan situation and discussed ways to coordinate further the efforts of OIC and the United Nations to bring about peace in Afghanistan.

25. Subsequently, I met Prime Minister Sharif on 31 January in Davos, Switzerland, where we exchanged views on Afghanistan. Mr. Sharif reconfirmed Pakistan's support for the United Nations efforts, saying that the United Nations and Pakistan had a common agenda in Afghanistan. I was encouraged by

the Prime Minister's comment that a solution to the conflict resided in a broad-based government and thus a "broad-based dialogue", involving all key actors in Afghanistan.

C. Humanitarian situation

26. The humanitarian situation deteriorated sharply in Bamyan Province, where several hundred thousand people suffered from severe food shortages owing to poor harvests caused by bad weather, a blockade of the Ghazni-Kabul trade route in the south of Bamyan and the lack of supplies coming in from the northern route owing to insecurity and looting. Despite numerous appeals by the United Nations for the blockade to be lifted, at the time of writing of the present report, it remained in place. While the World Food Programme (WFP) was able to distribute some 5,700 tons of locally purchased potatoes to 129,000 of the 160,000 neediest people, broader efforts to supply the region with wheat and other commodities in late autumn and early winter were largely unsuccessful. In December 1997, WFP negotiated an airlift of food supplies of up to 2,500 tons to Bamyan, but was forced to cancel it after delivering less than 10 per cent of the agreed quantity when Taliban authorities started dropping bombs at Bamyan airport and refused to guarantee safe passage of the United Nations chartered aircraft. Winter snow now makes this region inaccessible, and recent reports have indicated the threat of starvation in some of the more isolated areas.

27. The contamination of large areas with landmines and unexploded ordnance continued to be a major hindrance to rehabilitation and development in Afghanistan, as well as a deterrent to the return of refugees. More than 725 square kilometres of land remained contaminated, of which 324 square kilometres were considered high priority for clearance. In addition to building up its mine-awareness training activities, the Mine Action Programme of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance to Afghanistan enhanced its mine survey capacity - notably through the increased use of mine dog sets. A potential funding crisis was averted when donors responded positively to the interim appeal launched in December 1997.

28. Between 12 and 24 November 1997, the United Nations fielded an inter-agency gender mission to Afghanistan, led by Ms. Angela King, the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women. The mission examined the conditions of women in Afghanistan, looked at the contexts within which external assistance was planned and delivered, explored ways in which the international community could address gender concerns in the delivery of aid and proposed indicators which could be used to ensure the appropriate monitoring of assistance activities. The report of the mission offers guidelines for strengthening the role of women in the delivery of assistance. It focuses on two key issues that influence the provision of assistance: the current socio-economic environment and the principle-centred approach to gender that has been mandated by the United Nations, but which has often proven difficult to implement. The report discusses ways in which the principle-centred approach could be put into practice so that assistance can better serve the people of Afghanistan.

29. The second meeting of the Afghanistan Support Group was held in New York on 3 December 1997, chaired by Norway. Representatives from Australia, Canada,

Denmark, the European Commission, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Norway, the Russian Federation, Sweden, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America participated in the meeting, as well as representatives from United Nations agencies, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations. The Group discussed, inter alia, the political and security situation in Afghanistan; the strategic framework and the assistance strategy for Afghanistan (see A/52/536, paras. 50 and 51); human rights, gender and related issues; and drug control. During the meeting, the Afghanistan Support Group endorsed the evolving strategy for Afghanistan, while a proposal to establish a common funding mechanism was deemed premature. The next meeting of the Afghanistan Support Group is scheduled to be held in London in May 1998.

30. On 4 February 1998, an earthquake struck Rustaq district and its surrounding villages in Takhar Province, a remote mountainous area in northern Afghanistan. The earthquake destroyed 28 villages and resulted in the death of some 4,000 persons, with a further 20,000 rendered homeless. Bad weather from heavy snowfalls and rugged terrain hampered relief supplies from reaching this isolated part of Afghanistan. Relief supplies were therefore transported to the affected area more slowly than expected by land and air from within Afghanistan and from Pakistan and Tajikistan. The first aircraft to bring relief supplies was from the Pakistani air force. ICRC supported airdrop operations, which the United Nations complemented with airlifts. Coordination between agencies, both at Islamabad and in the field, was conducted efficiently and effectively, with ICRC coordinating non-food relief, the United Nations coordinating food supplies and Médecins Sans Frontières taking responsibility for medical supply coordination. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance to Afghanistan served as the focal point for information collation, consolidation and dissemination.

31. The 1998 consolidated appeal for Afghanistan was launched on 4 February 1998, seeking some US$ 157 million to meet assistance needs between 1 January and 31 December 1998. The appeal is a transitional one, constituting one of the first steps in implementing the assistance strategy for Afghanistan. The appeal suggests ways in which a common programme can be defined and realized, and emphasizes the importance of ensuring that the process is collaborative and transparent to all stakeholders. The appeal includes a number of longer-term projects, such as those in the fields of education and rural and urban rehabilitation, which are increasingly recognized as being fundamental to the achievement of sustainable peace.

32. The Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mr. Sergio Vieira de Mello, visited Afghanistan from 20 to 25 February 1998. He visited Kabul, Faizabad and Kandahar and met with senior local authorities and aid workers. Mr. Vieira de Mello underlined the importance of improved security and of a unified, coherent and consistent approach by United Nations agencies in the implementation of humanitarian assistance programmes.

33. The deteriorating security conditions for United Nations personnel continued to be of serious concern to me. I was particularly disturbed to learn that Taliban aircraft bombed Bamyan airport on 31 December and 1 January, when

United Nations personnel and aircraft were on the ground. On the first occasion, WFP was initiating an airlift of emergency food supplies to Bamyan, with the cooperation of the Pakistani authorities. On the second occasion, a United Nations team was at Bamyan airport to examine the security conditions. These attacks not only prevented the delivery of urgently needed food to 160,000 people who rely on United Nations assistance, but also jeopardized the safety of humanitarian workers. In both cases, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance to Afghanistan had obtained flight clearance from the Taliban in advance.

IV. ALLEGATIONS OF MASS KILLINGS

34. Disturbing evidence of possible mass killings surfaced during the reporting period, with accusations of mutual atrocities committed by combatants against civilian populations and prisoners of war. The seriousness of these accusations, which carry heavy moral, political and legal implications, has compelled me to draw the special attention of Member States to a future course of action the Organization should take in order to address the situations.

35. Following consolidation of his control over Jowzjan Province, General Dostum announced in mid-November that his forces had discovered a number of mass graves in northern Afghanistan. The General alleged that, while he was in exile in Turkey, Taliban prisoners had been massacred during the summer of 1997 under orders of his rival, General Malik. The allegation was denied by General Malik, who maintained, inter alia, that those buried in mass graves were soldiers who had been killed during the fighting.

36. Immediately after the news broke, I issued a statement on 18 November and expressed deep concern about the reported discovery of mass graves. I also instructed UNSMA to dispatch immediately a team to the area to obtain firsthand information. The UNSMA team, which visited Sheberghan on 19 November, was taken to the sites of mass graves by General Dostum himself. Various signs were observed, including human remains near the grave surfaces, which indicated that a large number of bodies were buried there. The team recommended that since it was unable to determine whether those buried were troops killed in action or prisoners executed, a prima facie investigation should be conducted by experts. A copy of the report was immediately forwarded to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

37. Subsequently, Mr. Paik, Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights for Afghanistan, visited Afghanistan between 30 November and 13 December 1997 and travelled to the sites of the alleged massacres. A forensic expert who accompanied Mr. Paik remained in the region for a longer period and on 6 January 1998 submitted a report to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. In the report, the forensic expert concluded that of the three areas he visited in northern Afghanistan for a preliminary investigation, two areas contained evidence that might support allegations of human rights abuses. He recommended that a neutral team of independent investigators re-examine those areas as soon as logistically possible.

38. Similar allegations of atrocities were made by Hazara leaders. They alleged that while retreating from the northern port of Hairaton in September 1997, Taliban troops had massacred the elders, women and children of villages near Mazar-i-Sharif. The Taliban authorities denied the allegation. During the mission, Mr. Paik also visited those villages. He recommended that an investigation be carried out to excavate, with permission, bodies in order to verify the allegations.

39. In January 1998, General Dostum alleged new atrocities by Taliban soldiers during their two-week occupation of Faryab Province in December 1997. While most residents of the affected villages fled before the Taliban advance, some of the noncombatants left behind - mainly the very old, women and small children - had reportedly fallen victim to acts of rape, murder, arson, looting, beatings and abductions. While the Taliban denied the accusations, the Northern Alliance leaders have called on the United Nations to investigate these alleged Taliban atrocities.

V. ACTIVITIES AT THE UNITED NATIONS

40. I stressed in my previous report (A/52/682-S/1997/894) that in view of the unabated supply of arms and the divergence of ways in which the countries concerned seemed to be dealing with the Afghan conflict, a solid international framework must be established in order to address the external aspects of the Afghan question. It was in this context that the Special Envoy and Mr. Kieran Prendergast, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, convened on 3 March the 4th meeting of the "Six plus Two". The group comprises the neighbours of Afghanistan - China, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan - as well as the Russian Federation and the United States.

41. At the meeting, the "Six plus Two" discussed and finalized their common talking points, which were to be used by them individually and collectively when they consulted the Afghan factions (see annex). They also had a preliminary exchange of views on effective and even-handed ways to curb the flow of arms and other war-making materials into Afghanistan, including the possibility of an embargo.

42. I am pleased to note that other than the "Six plus Two" group, a number of countries have shown keen interest in Afghanistan and expressed strong support for the United Nations efforts. Some of these other countries have expressed their intention to coordinate their diplomatic efforts with those of the "Six plus Two", including by using the same talking points in their own contacts with the Afghan factions.

VI. OBSERVATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

43. The tragedy of Afghanistan continues as the factions, supported by the uninterrupted supply of arms from outside, keep fighting in defiance of the will of the vast majority of the Afghan people. Foreign interference by countries in the region and beyond in the form of active political and military support of

one faction or another, reinforces the reluctance of the faction leaders to engage in serious political dialogue with one another and remains a major cause of the prolonged turmoil in Afghanistan.

44. In view of this, I remain convinced that it is imperative for the United Nations and Member States to take a hard look at the external aspects of the Afghan question and attempt to address them in earnest. This, of course, includes genuine efforts on the part of the countries concerned to find a common approach to the Afghan question and to agree on measures to curb the flow of arms and other war-making materials into Afghanistan.

45. While the focus remains on the external aspects, the United Nations will not turn away from the necessity of simultaneously addressing the internal aspects of the conflict. UNSMA will continue to maintain close contacts with Afghan parties and personalities with a view to ensuring an immediate ceasefire, which should be followed by genuine negotiations among the warring factions for national reconciliation.

46. I note with increasing alarm that, in recent months, the repeated mutual allegations of mass killings by the Afghan factions have heightened still further ethnic and sectarian tensions in Afghanistan. These developments warrant urgent action on the part of the United Nations; credible efforts should be made immediately in order to separate fact from unsubstantiated rumour. The need to verify accusations of human rights violations is indispensable, not only because of the gravity of the acts, but also to demonstrate United Nations responsiveness and even-handedness vis-à-vis the Afghan factions.

47. I recall in this context that in paragraph 13 of resolution 52/211 B, which was adopted by consensus, the General Assembly requested me to continue to investigate fully reports about mass killings of prisoners of war and civilians and incidents of rape in Afghanistan. The Security Council, in its presidential statement of 16 December 1997 (S/PRST/1997/55), noted with deep concern the reports about mass killings of prisoners of war and civilians in Afghanistan and supported my intention to continue to investigate fully such reports.

48. With the above resolution and statement in mind, a thorough examination was made of the report provided by the forensic expert who accompanied Mr. Paik, as well as of reports from UNSMA on the subject. I am already in close consultation with the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights with a view to launching the investigations called for under resolution 52/211 B.

49. The objective of these investigations, to be organized and conducted by the High Commissioner, would be to establish, to the extent possible, the facts with respect to the allegations. These investigations should cover, but not be limited to, all the allegations mentioned in section IV of the present report. It should be noted at this juncture that in order to conduct the investigations it will be indispensable for the United Nations to be given the cooperation of all the Afghan parties concerned. The findings of these investigations will be reported to the General Assembly and the Security Council.

50. In the meantime, I am obliged to repeat the plea already made so many times by my predecessors and me: that those Member States concerned should heed the

wish of the ever more desperate Afghan people that they cease supplying war-making materials to the Afghan factions.

51. In conclusion, I wish to take this opportunity to express my thanks to my Special Envoy, Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, for his continuing efforts and dedication to the Afghan peace process. I also wish to thank the personnel of UNSMA and its Acting Head, Mr. James C. Ngobi, for their dedication and perseverance in carrying out the tasks entrusted to them in extremely difficult and dangerous circumstances.

ANNEX

Final text of talking points on Afghanistan

Since October 1997, the United Nations Secretariat has convened in New York several meetings of a group of eight countries (comprising the six neighbours of Afghanistan, plus the United States of America and the Russian Federation). The group agreed that the United Nations and the eight Member States involved should be engaged - individually and collectively - with all the Afghan parties and that, in meetings with these parties, the following points should be made by the United Nations and all the members of the "Group of Eight":

1. The Afghan war, which has gone on for so long, has caused untold human misery and material destruction. It constitutes a serious threat to the territorial integrity of the country and to the national unity of its people. It is also a serious threat to regional and international security. It must be brought to a rapid close.

2. It is a matter of concern and regret that the Afghan leaders, whose forces are doing the actual fighting, have to date shown little readiness for serious negotiations with their opponents; these parties are now strongly urged to respond to calls for peace which are made by their own people, as well as by the United Nations and the international community at large.

3. For too long, whenever one side or another in Afghanistan has felt confident of victory, it has rebuffed efforts to bring about a peaceful solution and has only shown interest in negotiations when the military situation is reversed and it, in turn, has felt under threat - by which time the other side has lost its earlier interest in dialogue.

4. The involvement of outside powers in moral and material encouragement and support of the objectives of various Afghan groups has exacerbated the tragedy of Afghanistan. It has also raised suspicions and worsened relations among outside powers. It has not led to any of the Afghan groups achieving their objectives. The Group of Eight sees no signs of a change in this situation, no matter how long fighting among Afghan groups and outside support for this continues. Moreover, this continued fighting inside Afghanistan is causing the loss of promising opportunities for regional development which could benefit Afghanistan and its neighbours.

5. Therefore, the Eight have concluded that the time has come for all States Members of the United Nations, starting with the Group of Eight, to put pressure on their respective friends in Afghanistan to recognize - once and for all - that there can never be a military solution to the Afghan conflict because no one faction (whatever the composition of its current alliance) can win an outright victory or impose an exclusive dominance over the whole country.

6. In this connection, the Eight have agreed that the United Nations and all Member States should look at ways to see how the flow of arms and other supplies to the warring parties can be checked and, for example, if and how

a mandatory arms embargo could be implemented in a fair and verifiable manner. This needs to be done in such a manner that it does not provide advantage to any one group. If this is not possible, the Eight have agreed to consider, on a voluntary and unilateral basis, refraining from actions - including the supply of assistance - which could aggravate the war in Afghanistan.

7. Afghanistan needs a representative government, acceptable to all ethnic, religious, cultural, political and social groups in Afghanistan. Such a government could take on the arduous tasks of economic reconstruction, while at the same time adhering to international norms of behaviour and honouring international conventions to which Afghanistan is a party, in particular those regarding such issues as terrorism, narcotics, unhindered access to humanitarian assistance, as well as human rights, including the human rights of women and girls.

8. While there continue to be disturbing reports of human rights abuses, including evidence of mass executions, some encouraging signs have emerged recently amid the gloom of continued fighting, notably the stated readiness of both sides to withdraw preconditions for negotiating with each other, leading to the conclusion that now would be a good time to start such negotiations under United Nations auspices, with the participation of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, at a venue to be agreed upon.

9. Both sides should take some specific actions that the other side would interpret as genuine confidence-building measures and evidence of a desire to reach a settlement.

10. Relevant United Nations resolutions offer a good basis to reach agreement speedily on a ceasefire to be observed by all the warring parties; a mechanism will need to be established with the participation of all Afghan parties to monitor the implementation of the ceasefire. Reference can be made in particular to General Assembly resolution 51/195 B of 17 December 1996, operative paragraph 3 of which reads as follows:

> ["The General Assembly,]
>
> "3. Calls upon all Afghan parties to cease immediately all armed hostilities, to renounce the use of force, to put aside their differences and to engage in a political dialogue aimed at achieving national reconciliation and a lasting political settlement of the conflict and establishing a fully representative and broad-based transitional government of national unity".

11. The United Nations, as a universally recognized intermediary, must continue to play a central and impartial role in international efforts towards a peaceful resolution of the Afghan conflict.

12. The United Nations Secretariat and the Group of Eight will endeavour to mobilize the international community in a major coordinated effort, beyond those activities now under way, for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Afghanistan once conditions of relative normality and stability prevail in the country.

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ty-second session
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STION OF PALESTINE
SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST
ORT OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE TO
NVESTIGATE ISRAELI PRACTICES
FFECTING THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF THE
ALESTINIAN PEOPLE AND OTHER ARABS
F THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

SECURITY COUNCIL
Fifty-third year

Letter dated 12 March 1998 from the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary General

I wish to inform you of the current dangerous developments regarding the eriorating situation on the ground in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, luding Jerusalem. On 10 March 1998, Israeli soldiers shot and killed three estinian men and wounded four others at an army checkpoint in the West Bank ween the Palestinian villages of Tarkoumiah and Idnah, approximately 8 miles t of the city of Al-Khalil (Hebron). The men were Palestinian labourers from village of Dura, who were killed as they rode in a van returning to their es after a day of work in Israel. The Israeli troops indiscriminately opened e upon the van without any provocation.

Following this tragedy, clashes erupted in the West Bank between Israeli diers and Palestinian civilians mourning and protesting the killings. On March 1998, Israeli troops fired rubber-coated metal bullets at the testers, wounding approximately 34 Palestinians in and around Al-Khalil and roximately 10 other civilians in and around the city of Ramallah. Today, tinuing clashes resulted in the wounding of another 27 Palestinian testers. Further, in two separate incidents near Ramallah and Al-Khalil, two estinian youths were shot and wounded by Israeli settlers.

This is a time characterized by the continuing deadlock in the Israeli-estinian peace process owing to continuous Israeli violations and

non-compliance with the agreements reached between the two sides. Moreover, it is a time of increasing despair among the Palestinian people owing to the serious deterioration of the living conditions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including Jerusalem, as a result of the illegal policies and practices of Israel, in violation of international law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention of 12 August 1949, which is applicable to all the Palestinian territories occupied by Israel since 1967, including Jerusalem. Such recent actions by Israel, the occupying Power, only further fuel the tensions in the area and the overwhelming frustration and despair of the Palestinian people.

Clearly, while the Israeli side continuously vocalizes its alleged need for security as the reason for its refusal to proceed with the implementation of overdue provisions in the agreements reached, the security of the Palestinian people continues to remain an arbitrary consideration at constant risk at the hands of Israeli soldiers and settlers. Further, Israeli army checkpoints, which remain positioned throughout the West Bank owing to continuous delays in the redeployment of the Israeli army in violation of the agreements reached, are often the scenes of physical and verbal harassment and violence against the Palestinian people.

The continuation of such Israeli policies and practices in violation of the human rights of the Palestinian people, international humanitarian law, United Nations resolutions and the agreements reached between the two sides within the context of the Middle East peace process serves as a further reason for the resumption of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly to address illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory. In this regard, the United Nations, through all its relevant organs, must strive to genuinely uphold its permanent responsibility towards the question of Palestine until it is solved in all its aspects.

I would be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of the present letter distributed as an official document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 36, 37 and 87, as well as of the Security Council.

(Signed) Dr. Nasser AL-KIDWA
Permanent Observer of Palestine
to the United Nations

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Agenda item 115
Programme budget for the biennium 1996-1997

Integrated Management Information System project

Report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions

1. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has considered the ninth progress report of the Secretary-General on the Integrated Management Information System (IMIS) project, contained in document A/52/711. The Committee also had before it a report of the Board of Auditors on all aspects of its updated special audit of the IMIS project (A/52/755, annex), prepared in accordance with General Assembly resolution 51/225 of 16 May 1997 and a recommendation of the Committee contained in paragraph 47 of document A/51/533. During the course of its consideration of the reports, the Committee met with the Under-Secretary-General of the Department of Management and with other representatives of the Secretary-General, who provided additional information.

2. The Advisory Committee welcomes the observations and recommendations of the Board of Auditors and fully concurs in them. The Committee was informed by the Administration that considerable progress had been made. The Committee points out, however, that much remains to be done. Annex I to the present report contains an update on corrective actions taken by the Administration during its implementation of the recommendations of the Board of Auditors.

3. The implementation of IMIS was approved by the General Assembly in December 1988. The project was originally expected to be fully implemented in January 1994 at United Nations Headquarters and in July 1994 at offices away from Headquarters. Currently the Administration believes that the project will be completed after July 1998. Upon enquiry, the Administration clarified that the development of the payroll function was scheduled to be completed by 30 June 1998 and that it was to be tested in parallel with the current payroll system at Headquarters beginning in July 1998. It is planned that the old payroll system will be phased out by 1 January 1999. Some remaining functionalities, such as insurance and time and attendance, will not be completed by July 1998 but will continue to be developed while payroll is being tested and run in parallel. The implementation of Release 3, financial and support services applications, and Release 4, payroll, at offices away from Headquarters will continue throughout 1999. The Administration further clarified that the plan was to complete the installation of the entire system at all duty stations by the end of 1999.

4. The Administration also clarified that, in addition, the contractor was still required to complete some tasks under former Release 5 related mainly to data distribution and consolidation. According to the Secretary-General, the completion date of those tasks is being determined with the contractor and will be reported in the consolidated plan. It is recalled that Release 5 initially comprised budget formulation and worldwide data transmission, including a consolidated database for global reporting. In the course of the review of the scope of the project undertaken in 1994, it was determined that the transmission software would be

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required to enable exchange of data with offices away from Headquarters. In paragraph 29 of the sixth progress report on IMIS (A/C.5/48/12/Add.1) it was stated that the Secretary-General had concluded that the most responsible course of action was to concentrate on the completion of Releases 3 (accounting) and 4 (payroll), reducing the scope of the project by not implementing the budget formulation applications (Release 5). Therefore, what remains to be performed under the former Release 5 is the data transmission part. The Advisory Committee is of the view, however, that budget formulation and implementation is an important part of the Organization's administrative and management mechanism and the integrated management system cannot be considered complete without it. The Committee requests, therefore, that the Secretary-General explore the feasibility of reinstating the development of the budget applications part of the IMIS project.

5. The ninth report of the Secretary-General provides an update of the current status of the IMIS project and the operation of the system together with a presentation of the work still to be undertaken. The report contains revised resource requirements for the development and implementation of the project and an overall summary of the estimated actual expenditures as at 31 December 1997, together with the status of the various activities as at 31 October 1997. The revised estimate of the project is $72.9 million, excluding maintenance costs, which reflects additional requirements totalling $10.4 million.

6. As can be seen from the table in section III of the ninth report, the net additional requirements of $10.4 million are attributable mainly to contractual services ($7.9 million) and general temporary assistance/overtime ($5.3 million), and also reflect an impact of reduced requirements under travel ($1.2 million), software ($0.6 million), training ($0.6 million) and hardware ($0.5 million). The requirements for contractual services of $7.9 million include an amount of $3.2 million for implementation support provided by the contractor since 1993, which, in the view of the Secretary-General, should not have been charged to the IMIS project budget. The Advisory Committee points out, in this connection, that the charge of $3.2 million was brought to the attention of the General Assembly four years after the contractor started to incur expenses in 1993.

7. As can be seen from the explanation of reduced requirements for travel, training, hardware and software (A/52/711, paras. 60-62), the reductions are due to efficient organization of work, such as combining trips to more than one duty station and arranging for training to be administered by United Nations staff instead of the contractor, to falling prices on hardware and to the negotiation of contracts at preferential rates with software vendors. The Advisory Committee notes the efforts to bring about the reductions, which, according to the information provided by the Administration, should not negatively affect the implementation of the project. The Committee stresses, however, that efforts to achieve economy should not adversely affect the training of staff, which is vital to the effective implementation and operation of IMIS. In this connection, the Committee expects that as the United Nations assumes responsibility for training, it should ensure that the expertise available from the contractor has been adequately mastered by those in the United Nations who are responsible for carrying out IMIS training.

8. The Committee notes from annex I to document A/52/711 that resource requirements for general temporary assistance total $6.6 million for 1998-1999, reflecting an increase of $5.3 million. This would provide for a staffing structure for the biennium equivalent to 25 Professional posts (1 P-5, 14 P-4 and 10 P-3) in addition to 1 P-2 proposed for three months and 5 General Service posts (Other level). The Committee shares the view of the Secretary-General expressed in paragraph 4 of the annex that, owing to year 2000 requirements, it is imperative that Releases 3 and 4 be implemented at offices away from Headquarters before the end of 1999.

9. With regard to the proposed requirements of $5.4 million for contractual services for 1998-1999, the Advisory Committee stresses the need to improve considerably control over expenditures, relating them more closely to specific deliverables related to software changes. It is recalled that a contractor was engaged in May 1991 to develop IMIS at a total price of $17 million; by August 1996, after 13 amendments, the price had increased to $34.5 million. The contract was further amended in August 1997 to provide for a total amount of $37.2 million. The Committee notes from the table in section III of document A/52/711 that the cost of contractual services for the IMIS project is now estimated at $42.2 million. As the Board of Auditors noted in paragraph 79 of its report (A/52/755), the time and cost overruns were partially due to deficiencies in the original specifications of IMIS when the system was conceived. The Committee believes that a thorough analysis of the reasons for the increase in the cost of the IMIS contract (along the items listed in paragraph 79 of the Board of Auditors' report) should be carried out by the Office of Internal Oversight Services and the results submitted by the Secretary-General to the Committee.

10. The Advisory Committee points out that in spite of the significant increase in the price of the contract, a performance bond of $1.7 million was not adjusted

accordingly and now represents less than 5 per cent of the cost of the contract, while initially it was established at 10 per cent. The Committee was not provided with a satisfactory clarification of the issue, and it therefore requests that the Secretary-General review the feasibility of amending the contract to increase the performance bond so that it would reflect 10 per cent of the most recently updated cost of the contract.

11. In the view of the Advisory Committee, the findings of the Board of Auditors set out in paragraphs 60 to 65 of its report point to poor project management, implementation and monitoring. For example, the Administration had not updated the list of deliverables since September 1994, even though it had subsequently added new tasks to the contract and had dropped several major sections, such as the budget formulation part of Release 5. Furthermore, the work plan was not changed after March 1995, and as a result it was outdated and of little practical use. Payments to the contractor were made without due regard for the timing and quality of deliverables but only on the basis of the number of hours claimed, according to the attendance log maintained by the Administration. In such a situation there is little incentive for contractors to complete tasks within an agreed work schedule since, instead of being penalized for delays, they are actually rewarded by being paid for additional hours worked.

12. The findings of the Board of Auditors given in paragraphs 67 to 72 of its report have led the Advisory Committee to believe that the Administration may have made erroneous payments for out-of-scope work. In this connection, the Committee notes the conclusion of an internal study commissioned by the Administration that out of 214 changes made in Release 3, which were accepted as enhancements and paid for accordingly, 199 changes were made to correct errors that should have been corrected under the warranty (para. 70). The Committee also notes the observation by the Board of Auditors that the lack of a proper evaluation of whether changes were within or outside the scope of the contract rendered the Organization vulnerable to claims from the IMIS contractor for additional payment (para. 72). In the opinion of the Committee, this vulnerability was exacerbated by the absence of an adequate number of qualified Secretariat staff.

13. Upon enquiry the Advisory Committee was informed that, as recommended by the Board of Auditors, an administrative officer was assigned to the project in 1995. He was in charge of all administrative matters related to the project. He assisted the Chief of the project in contract management, but did not possess specific experience in that area and was transferred to another position. The Department of Management has recently assigned a contract officer to assist and advise the chief of the project on contractual issues and is planning to assign an accounting clerk on a part-time basis to assist with accounting issues. Moreover, the Committee was informed that currently there were nine vacancies in the IMIS project: 1 P-5, 2 P-4, 5 P-3 and 1 General Service. All vacancies were advertised and some were re-advertised. Applications have been received and are being evaluated and, according to representatives of the Secretary-General, interviews should be completed by the end of March 1998.

14. The Advisory Committee also notes from paragraph 82 of the report of the Board of Auditors that the Administration had paid $2.59 million to the IMIS contractor as a compensation for delays attributed to the United Nations. When the contract was renegotiated in March 1994, the IMIS contractor accepted 25 per cent of the responsibility for the delays and requested the United Nations to compensate it for the rest of the delay in executing the project. However, neither was the delay analysed nor were any remedial measures taken. The Committee was provided with additional information on IMIS contractual arrangements, which is reproduced in annex II to the present report.

15. The Advisory Committee notes from the ninth progress report of the Secretary-General that improvements to Release 3 need to be carried out by both United Nations personnel (the Accounts Division) and the contractor. The Administration clarified that the tasks to be performed were different: the contractor is to make and deliver changes to the software, while the United Nations personnel will provide the specifications, follow the development work, prepare and conduct extensive testing, conduct training of users and perform other technical tasks (conversion of data, preparation of report specifications, testing of reports, etc.) for the implementation of the changes.

16. The Advisory Committee was provided, upon request, with additional information on the contribution of United Nations peacekeeping operations to the IMIS project, their benefits from IMIS and future plans for IMIS in peacekeeping operations. The Administration has indicated that peacekeeping operations had contributed $8.5 million through their budgets to the IMIS project. Since the inception of IMIS, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations has been the major user of the system at Headquarters. The financial transactions processed in the field are incorporated into IMIS at Headquarters, and all the financial transactions processed by the Department are performed through IMIS. Approximately 33 per cent of

personnel actions currently administered through IMIS belong to the Department.

17. The Administration has also clarified that when the project was launched it was not planned to have the system implemented at peacekeeping missions. Both the IMIS team and the Department have been looking at technical solutions for extending the system to peacekeeping operations. Therefore a special project to test a new technology for the remote assessing of IMIS was undertaken (paras. 41 and 42, A/52/711). Such technology is of interest not only to the United Nations but also to other organizations using the system. A report summarizing the findings of the project is under preparation and will be circulated among all the interested users of IMIS for further consideration.

18. The Advisory Committee was informed that negotiations were under way with the contractor to settle the question of what charges already billed to or paid by the United Nations might be covered under warranty. Also, negotiations are being conducted regarding additional work for Release 4 and on re-engineering the remaining contract. The Committee shares the concern of the Board of Auditors about the ability of the United Nations to negotiate changes to the contract on equal terms with the contractor (para. 72, A/52/755) and shares the Board's recommendation that the Administration address the need to secure adequate in-house expertise on technical features of the system in order to reduce dependence on the IMIS contractor (para. 75).

19. It is recalled that the ninth progress report of the Secretary-General contained a proposal initially mentioned in the second performance report for the biennium 1996-1997 (A/C.5/52/32), to finance the additional requirements of $10.4 million for IMIS through transfers from other sections of the programme budget for the biennium 1996-1997 in which under-expenditures were realized. In the course of its consideration of that report, the General Assembly included a special provision of $3 million for IMIS in the final appropriation for the biennium, provided that the amount would not be encumbered without the prior approval of the Advisory Committee. The Committee received a preliminary indication of how the $3 million would be spent, but it has not yet received a formal request for its concurrence. The Committee will revert to the matter upon the receipt of such a request.

20. The representatives of the Secretary-General informed the Advisory Committee during its current session that a preliminary analysis of actual expenditures as at 31 December 1997 indicated that it might be possible to accommodate additional requirements of up to $7.4 million for the IMIS project within the overall limit of the final appropriation of $2,542,071,900 for the biennium 1996-1997 approved by the General Assembly in its resolution 52/213 A of 22 December 1997. In that connection, the Committee recalls that a number of outputs were deferred, postponed or curtailed during the biennium 1996-1997.[1] The Committee will examine the feasibility of the Secretary-General's assumption with regard to the amount of up to $7.4 million in the context of paragraph 6 (b) of resolution 52/213 A, in which the Assembly authorized the Secretary-General to transfer credits between sections of the budget with the concurrence of the Committee. Any amounts transferred would be placed in the IMIS account, which is a multi-year account. Related commitments would not be entered into without the prior approval of the Committee, which will take into account developments with regard to the negotiations with the IMIS contractor.

Notes

[1] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-second Session* (A/52/7), para. 12.

Annex I

Corrective action taken by the Administration

Concerning the recommendations of the Board of Auditors, the Administration is taking the following actions:

(a) Plan of action for the completion of tables and periodic review of the accuracy of the data

The plan will be established within the framework of the activities of the Task Force on Human Resources that has recently been convened. The accuracy of the human resources data is being reviewed at all duty stations within the framework of the implementation of Release 2, scheduled for April. The verification of the accuracy of the data will be done on an ongoing basis by the Office of Human Resources Management and offices away from Headquarters. Those tasks are being performed within existing resources.

(b) Analyse the reasons why Release 2 did not work and draw up a plan of action for activating the System

The reasons for the problems with Release 2 are described in the ninth progress report (A/52/711) and had been referred to in the seventh progress report (A/C.5/50/35). The re-engineering of Release 2 has been completed; system testing is scheduled to start on 24 February 1998; training of users is scheduled to start in mid-March; and the new Release 2 will be activated on 20 April 1998. Resources for contractual services in the amount of $340,000 have been budgeted in addition to work being performed by the IMIS team and the Office of Human Resources Management within existing resources (training, testing, manuals).

(c) Development of diagnostic tools

Eight diagnostic tools have been developed so far. They are being used to monitor the quality of the data and will be further refined. The development of other diagnostic tools, including for payroll, is under review. These have been developed primarily by IMIS team members.

(d) Development of regular reports to facilitate the preparation of financial statements

A total of eight reports remain to be completed. Standardized queries are available to provide the necessary data. As at the end of February 1998 78 financial reports will be available to users. The related costs have been included in temporary assistance and contractual costs incurred to December 1997. Future costs, related also to other reporting needs, have been budgeted in the tables in paragraph 2 ($0.9 million as temporary assistance) and paragraph 8 ($0.3 million as contractual costs) of document A/52/711, annex I.

(e) Preparation of a comprehensive plan of action for all the outstanding problems generated in the System

The plan to address the priorities issue and the resources required is under development. It is expected to be completed by mid-March. It should be noted that the plan is geared towards addressing the priority issues and not all the issues, since, owing to the nature of the software, there will always be issues to be added as lower priority items. An amount of $3.7 million has been budgeted (A/52/711, annex I, para. 8).

(f) Amendment of the contract to update the list of deliverables and work plan and use them to monitor payments and deliverables

This work is scheduled to be completed by the end of March 1998.

(g) Definition of system enhancement requests in order to ensure that the contractor carries out work within the scope of the contract

This is being implemented for both outstanding Release 3 items and for Release 4. Close monitoring of these activities will be enforced.

(h) Adequate in-house expertise

(i) Deployment of qualified manpower to develop in-house capability to manage the system

The recruitment against the remaining vacant posts is being accelerated.

(j) Full implementation of the long-term maintenance plan taking into account requirements and responsibilities of user offices

Each concerned office will finalize its plan by mid-1998.

(k) Overhaul of the existing reporting facility to minimize the necessity of ad hoc queries

The reporting facility has been improved to facilitate the selective downloading of data. Performance issues are being addressed. The facility for launching standardized queries that are required by a limited number of specialized users and need not to be included in the reporting facility is under construction. Part of the work is being carried out within existing resources. The budgetary provisions referred to under (d) above also relate to this item.

Annex II

Information on contractual arrangements for the Integrated Management Information System provided by the Administration to the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions

History of the contract

In 1991, after competitive bidding, two companies were shortlisted and the current contractor was eventually selected. The contract amount was $17.1 million. The original contract was for the development of the system according to specifications prepared under phase 2 of the project by another contractor. The proposal that was received from that contractor in 1991 was $25 million. The latter had developed the specifications following a study conducted by a third consulting company.

At the time of the selection, the contractor's cost structure (hourly rates per type of staff) was the second lowest. The same price structure has been maintained for all activities (base contract and out-of-scope work), adjusted by the annual cost-of-living increment until July 1997. This price structure is still in force for the base contract. The rates were revised for out-of-scope work in July 1997. Even with this revision, they are still lower than those proposed by the other four companies in 1991.

The request for proposal called for the development of the system and for the delivery of the whole system at the end of the contract. Since this approach appeared to be too risky, the request for proposal also included a provision to review whether a staged approach, i.e., development and delivery of the system by releases for a staged implementation by the United Nations, would be preferable.

The performance bond was established in 1991 on the basis of the initial value of the contract and to protect the United Nations if the system was not delivered or if it had not functioned after delivery.

At the beginning of 1992 the contract was subsequently modified for implementation by releases. This allowed the United Nations to receive both the code and the system progressively, thus reducing the risk. Most of the additional work to be performed as out-of-scope work represented time and material for additional or modified functionalities being delivered on an ongoing basis, plus implementation and operations support activities. The need to increase the value of the performance bond was not considered.

When the decision was made to implement the system by releases, the contractor recommended that the first release be the one related to human resources, since it was the most complete one in the design documents prepared by the prior contractor.

The code for Release 1 was delivered in April 1993. The release was not implemented until September 1993. The implementation was made possible by a decision made in mid-1993 by the IMIS Steering Committee to request the contractor to provide additional services for the implementation and maintenance of Release 1. This was believed to be necessary because of the lack of preparedness of the United Nations to implement Release 1 by itself.

In January 1994, the contractor requested a renegotiation of the contract, mainly as a result of delays on the part of the United Nations in completing the work. Another point raised by the contractor was the fact that the United Nations had not deployed a sufficient number of staff to cope with the requirements of the project. A revision was made to the scope of the contract.

In mid-1994, the United Nations undertook a review of the level of resources available to support the completion of the development of the system and for its implementation. The reprogramming and rebudgeting of the system were endorsed by the General Assembly and the project activities were redirected. This exercise was analysed and reviewed by the Board of Auditors in its special audit of the project conducted during the second half of 1994.

During the second quarter of 1994, the contractor started delivering most of the Release 3 (financial applications) system code and the United Nations assigned a team of users to test and review the system. The user review resulted in a large number of changes to the code.

On 1 April 1996, Release 3, the core of the system, was implemented. As was already reported, it turned out to be an extremely difficult undertaking since most of the transactions having financial implications were changed, a new account code structure was introduced, and more than 1,000 staff had to be trained. The conversion of data from

the old systems was also extremely demanding. The contractor was heavily involved in the implementation, support and post-implementation tasks of that Release. Those activities were clearly out of scope.

Contract specifications

The base contract is a fixed-price contract. It was meant to provide a fully tested and operational system according to the specifications established in 1991 after extensive work with users worldwide. One of the underlying assumptions reflected in the proposal made by the contractor was that there would be limited expansion in the project scope. Fixed-price contracts are a suitable modality when specifications are adhered to. In the case of the IMIS contract, specifications provided to the contractor represented the best knowledge of the business of the United Nations by the staff at that time. The auditors have concluded, and the Administration concurs, that those specifications have proven to be inadequate. In fact, because of the evolution of requirements acquired through the analytical process for developing the system, IMIS, as it stands now, is significantly different from that which was originally conceived and reflected in the contract.

When the contract was renegotiated in early 1994, it was assumed by both parties that the revised specifications agreed upon in November 1993 for changes to Release 3 were definitive and stable to allow a timely implementation of the system in 1995.

Testing of the first components of Release 3 started in May 1994, mainly with a new team of United Nations staff from the Accounts Division. It was the first time that the United Nations was able to assign to IMIS a full team of system accountants and staff with prior experience in financial systems development and implementation. The delay in involving users, addressed in various audit reports since 1992, was due to the lack of expertise in the area of systems development in the United Nations and the limited staff resources available to work with the contractor and the IMIS team. The team that tested the system identified deficiencies in the system as constructed, both in terms of errors in operations (contractor's responsibility) and in usability of the system (incorrect specifications on the part of the United Nations). This assessment led to the creation of a new task of "user review", which was carried out between September 1994 and April 1995 and determined major changes to Release 3. These were in addition to changes necessary to meet the contract specifications.

One of the main issues that has been addressed by the auditors is related to the way in which it was decided to change the system as of December 1994. The contractor was bound to make changes to the system to meet the original specifications, as revised at the end of 1993, which .meant that the contractor would have to introduce changes twice in certain cases. This would have resulted in major additional costs for the United Nations and further delays in the implementation of Release 3. It was, however, agreed that all changes would be made at the same time. It should be noted that the contractor did not bill more than 10,000 hours for work performed on Release 3.

In retrospect this change in strategy should have been better documented and the contract amended accordingly. The monitoring of the work performed, however, would not have been materially different owing to the nature of the tasks and the impossibility of separating the work done under the base contract and out-of-scope work. Most often they were performed simultaneously.

It is important to note that there appears to be a misunderstanding in the interpretation of the contract on the part of the auditors. It is the release of the 10 per cent holdback only and not the payment for each stage that is due after certifying that the work under that stage has been satisfactorily completed and all relevant major deliverables have been accepted. Article 13.5 of the contract specifies that, solely for the purpose of tracking payments to be made to the contactor under article 14, the cost of the contract had been budgeted by stage of work. In addition, article 14.1 of the contract stipulates that the United Nations would make monthly progress payments to the contractor, and the monthly invoices would be submitted to the United Nations in accordance with the hourly rates set forth in the contract.

Indeed, all such factors as the change in the phasing of the system, additional tasks and scope changes, concurrent activities under the base fixed-price contract and under task order, and amendments for work to be billed on a time and material basis, made it extremely difficult to monitor the contract.

Since 1994, additional contractor costs have arisen in the following areas:

(a) Project management costs, identified separately, due to the extension of the completion of the project beyond mid-1995 as foreseen in the renegotiated contract of 1994;

(b) Changes to the system arising from new or changed requirements;

(c) Implementation and operation support activities required owing to the lack of sufficient staff resources within the Secretariat.

The definition of the priorities was determined by the user areas or imposed by immediate operational needs. The level of commitment of United Nations resources lagged behind the need for the United Nations to take over the operational responsibility for the system. The project team consequently had to assume far more responsibilities than were originally expected. This problem had already been identified by the independent experts who had conducted a study in 1992 at the request of the General Assembly and by the Board of Auditors in its 1993 report but was not adequately addressed. The project team and the chief of the project were faced with an unwarranted and excessive volume of work.

For those reasons the contractor's services were used in part to compensate for the lack of sufficient internal resources.

In mid-1994, a system of task orders was made part of the contract after approval by the Headquarters Committee on Contracts. Orders for specific tasks were issued. In addition, major changes to the system for Release 3 were identified. As of mid-1995, funding was also provided for in the contract under the global heading of Release 2 maintenance and Release 3 maintenance activities with specific ceilings. No individual task orders were issued under those headings. This was due to the extremely high volume of activities, the frequent changes in requirements and priorities and the physical inability of the project team to cope with the workload. The contractor, however, performed tasks at the request and under the supervision of the IMIS project team staff.

The amounts billed were monitored by tracking the actual number of hours worked, the migration to production of changes to the system and other services provided as and when required. It should be noted that, owing to the nature of the work, it is not possible to monitor the amount of time spent on each individual task. Most often, individual tasks are performed in a consolidated manner when a specific part of the code is "opened" to make changes. Since 1 May 1996 to date, there have been about 359 changes that were migrated to production. In addition, extensive work was undertaken for the technical upgrade of the system (more than 300 items needed to be corrected).

It should be emphasized that the contractor performs its work based on the priority established by the users and the United Nations IMIS team. The specifications of changes are documented, reviewed and approved by the United Nations. The changes are then delivered to the Organization for testing and are migrated once approval of the United Nations is obtained. All the work performed is documented.

The Administration recognizes that the procedures followed were less than optimal but were practical and prudent, even if they were not as complete as the auditors would like. Lessons learned include the following:

(a) Staff resources assigned to the project team itself should have been more adequate;

(b) Within the United Nations, more adequate staff resources should have been provided, ownership of the system should have been transferred earlier, and responsibility should have been assumed earlier for the various activities at the appropriate levels in the user areas. Although corrective actions were undertaken in 1994 and 1995 as far as Release 3 was concerned, this was clearly too late and insufficient;

(c) There should have been formal controls to link payments for out-of-scope work more closely to specific items. This lack of detail was a direct consequence of the inadequate resources assigned to the project team;

(d) The original specifications provided as a basis for the contract in 1991 were not complete;

(e) The magnitude and complexity of the task were underestimated from the inception of the project.

While those shortcomings are recognized, the Administration wishes to point out that in the case of project management, the main objective continued to be the delivery of a functioning system. The Administration considers that due recognition should be given to the fact that the system is in operation. It is far from being perfect, but the system has been implemented to a large extent.

The Administration wishes to point out again that the issues related to IMIS are not unique for this type of undertaking.

In accordance with the recommendations of the Board of Auditors and as indicated to the Advisory Committee, the following activities are being undertaken as far as the contract is concerned :

(a) Review of the base contract to identify deliverables that are still pending;

(b) Updating of the work plan for Releases 4 and 5;

(c) Negotiation on and detailed definition of tasks that remain to be accomplished and that would be out of scope, to be billed on a time and material basis. The costs

have been estimated to total up to $5 million (A/52/711, annex I, para. 8, table).

In addition, discussions are taking place on the definition of out-of-scope work as far as items delivered in the biennium 1996-1997 are concerned.

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Fifty-second session
Agenda item 119
Pattern of conferences

Pattern of conferences

Measures to ensure the necessary resources for the upgrading of conference rooms and interpretation booths

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report was prepared in response to General Assembly resolution 52/214 B of 22 December 1997, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to address the matter of the technical and audio quality of some conference rooms and to ensure the necessary resources for the upgrading of conference rooms and interpretation booths.

98-06498 (E) 130398

1. In paragraph 26 of its resolution 52/214 B of 22 December 1997, the General Assembly expressed concern about the technical and audio quality of some conference rooms and in this regard requested the Secretary-General to present proposals in order to ensure all necessary resources for the upgrading of those conference rooms, including interpretation booths.

2. In accordance with the systematic modernization programme endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 37/14 E of 16 November 1982, resources for improvements to conference rooms have progressively been included in successive proposed programme budgets. For the biennium 1998-1999, resources amounting to approximately $600,000 have been included in the current programme budget for the refurbishment of conference rooms 6 and 10. Further resources estimated at $1,300,000 for the refurbishment of a further two conference rooms (4 and 5) and all interpretation booths are intended to be proposed for inclusion in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001 as a continuation of the ongoing programme for the refurbishment of conference rooms.

3. During the biennium 1996-1997, new simultaneous interpretation and voting equipment was installed in conference room 2 in 1997 and minor upgrades were performed in conference room 5, to meet required standards while further detailed upgrades were postponed. Upgrading for conference rooms 6 and 10 will be completed during the 1998-1999 biennium.

4. As concerns the improvements to the interpretation booths, in all conference rooms, these are considered part of the overall upgrade of each room and would be improved simultaneously with improvements to the conference room itself.

5. As will be noted, certain conference rooms remain to be upgraded. While there is no current provision in the programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999 for such outstanding work, it is anticipated that refurbishment activity will be completed in due course as further resources become available in future bienniums.

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Fifty-second session
Agenda item 37
THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST

SECURITY COUNCIL
Fifty-third year

Letter dated 13 March 1998 from the Permanent Representative of Lebanon to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

On instructions from my Government and further to our earlier letters concerning Israel's attacks on southern Lebanon and the Western Bekaa and the arbitrary practices against the civilian inhabitants in which it engages on a daily basis, I have the honour to notify you of the series of such incidents that took place in February 1998.

1 February 1998

At 1025 hours Israeli warplanes attacked the Mlita and Jabal Safi hills in the Iqlim al-Tuffah area firing air-to-surface missiles.

At 1220 hours the southern outskirts of Mashgharah came under Israeli artillery fire. Two mortar shells fell near residential localities, and three persons were wounded and a number of dwellings were damaged.

At 1230 hours clashes erupted in the Tumat Niha area of Jazzin district between Lahad militia elements and men of the Lebanese Resistance in which all types of weapons were used. Calm was restored at about 1330 hours.

2 February 1998

At 0630 hours outlying areas of Nabatiyah al-Fawqa and the abandoned Lebanese Army barracks there came under Israeli artillery fire.

At 0945 hours Israeli warplanes overflew the Nabatiyah area at low altitudes.

At 0950 hours Israeli warplanes overflew Sidon and the nearby camps.

At 1100 hours outlying areas of Jba' and Kafr Fila and the Mlita and Jabal Safi hills came under Israeli artillery fire.

At 1200 hours the security situation in the Jabal al-Rayhan area of Jazzin district grew tense and clashes erupted between Israeli and Lahad militia forces on the one hand and men of the Lebanese National Resistance on the other. All types of weapons were used, and several shells fell on Rayhan town and damaged a number of dwellings.

At 1900 hours the vicinity of the abandoned Lebanese Army barracks in Nabatiyah al-Fawqa came under Israeli artillery fire and received bursts of fire from other weapons.

3 February 1998

At 0800 hours outlying areas of Majdal Zun, Mansuri, Hinniyah and Izziyah came under Israeli artillery fire.

At 0930 hours Israeli forces closed the Kafr Hunah - Marj Uyun crossing.

At 1015 hours Israeli warplanes overflew the Nabatiyah area.

At 1100 hours Israeli warplanes overflew Sidon and the nearby camps and were met by ground-based anti-aircraft fire from units belonging to the Lebanese Army.

At 1430 hours Israeli warplanes overflew the Nabatiyah area at low altitudes.

At 1455 hours Israeli warplanes overflew the Na'imah hills in Shuf district at medium altitudes.

At 1730 hours outlying areas of Arabsalim, Jarju', Ayn Bu Siwar, Luwayzah, Jba' and Ayn Qana and the Mlita and Jabal Safi hills came under Israeli artillery fire.

At 2200 hours a number of artillery shells fell in the vicinity of the abandoned Lebanese Army barracks in Nabatiyah al-Fawqa.

4 February 1998

At 0940 hours Israeli warplanes overflew Sidon and the nearby camps at low altitudes and were met by ground-based anti-aircraft fire from units belonging to the Lebanese Army.

At 1020 hours Israeli warplanes overflew Sidon and the nearby camps at low altitudes and were met by ground-based anti-aircraft fire from units belonging to the Lebanese Army.

At 1230 hours Israeli warplanes overflew Dayr al-Qamar at low altitudes and were met by ground-based anti-aircraft fire from units belonging to the Lebanese Army.

At 1430 hours outlying areas of Jba', Ayn Bu Siwar and Jarju' and the Mlita and Jabal Safi hills came under Israeli artillery fire.

At 1600 hours Israeli warplanes overflew the Nabatiyah area at low altitudes carrying out mock attacks and were met by ground-based anti-aircraft fire from units belonging to the Lebanese Army.

At 1600 hours Israeli warplanes overflew Mashgharah, Ayn al-Tinah and Saydun in Western Bekaa district.

At 1630 hours hostile aircraft bombarded the Zillaya water system along the Litani River.

At 2030 hours the vicinity of the abandoned Lebanese Army barracks in Nabatiyah al-Fawqa came under artillery fire and received bursts of fire from other weapons fired from enemy positions.

5 February 1998

At 1630 hours outlying areas of Jba', Ayn Bu Siwar and Ayn Qana and the Mlita and Jabal Safi hills came under Israeli artillery fire.

At 1800 hours the Iqlim al-Tuffah area came under Israeli artillery fire.

6 February 1998

At 1200 hours Yatar and its outlying areas came under Israeli artillery fire. One person, Nazim Qaduh, was seriously wounded and many dwellings were damaged.

At 0630 hours outlying areas of Majdal Zun, Mansuri, Hinniyah, Izziyah and Qulaylah came under Israeli artillery fire. It continued until 0800 hours.

7 February 1998

At 0600 hours outlying areas of Kafra, Yatar, Haris, Sadaqa, Ayta al-Jabal, Majdal Silm and Tulin came under Israeli artillery fire. One person was injured and many dwellings were damaged.

At 0800 hours outlying areas of Zibqin, Jibal al-Butm and Siddiqin in Tyre district came under Israeli artillery fire. It continued for one hour.

At 0830 hours Israeli warplanes overflew the Nabatiyah area at low altitudes.

8 February 1998

At 1300 hours outlying areas of Kafra and Yatar came under Israeli artillery fire.

10 February 1998

At 1130 hours towns of Luwayzah and Mlikh and areas along the Litani River came under Israeli artillery fire.

11 February 1998

At 1315 hours outlying areas of Libbaya in Western Bekaa district came under intermittent artillery fire.

12 February 1998

At 1110 hours Israeli warplanes flew over the Nabatiyah area and over Janta, Yahfufa and Nabi Shit in Baalbek district at low altitudes. They were met by ground-based anti-aircraft fire.

13 February 1998

At 1030 hours hostile aircraft overflew the Nabatiyah area at low altitudes.

At 1530 hours outlying areas of Yatar came under Israeli artillery fire. It was calculated that some 15 artillery shells of miscellaneous calibre fell there.

At 2150 hours outlying areas of Kafr Rumman came under Israeli artillery fire.

14 February 1998

At 2300 hours a rocket-propelled projectile fell on a dwelling in Shihin, Tyre district, and five persons were wounded.

Kafr Rumman came under hostile bombardment that affected residential areas and damaged many dwellings.

At 1145 hours the Israeli artillery bombardment of outlying areas of Kafr Rumman was resumed. It extended to the Habbush vicinity.

At 1240 hours outlying areas of Arabsalim and Humin al-Fawqa, areas along the Zahrani River and the Habbush bridge came under Israeli artillery fire. One person was wounded.

At 2200 hours outlying areas of Majdal Silm, Bra'shit, Haddatha, Ayta al-Jabal, Kafra and Yatar came under Israeli artillery fire.

16 February 1998

At 1500 hours elements of the militia of the client Lahad proceeded to detain two residents of Sha'ba in Hasbayya district.

At 0630 hours outlying areas of Majdal Silm, Khirbat Silm, Jumayjimah and Sawwanah came under Israeli artillery fire.

At 1410 hours Israeli warplanes overflew Sidon and the nearby camps at medium altitudes and were met by ground-based anti-aircraft fire from units belonging to the Lebanese Army.

17 February 1998

At 0000 hours outlying areas of Nabatiyah al-Fawqa and the vicinity of the abandoned Lebanese Army barracks came under Israeli artillery fire.

20 February 1998

At 0000 hours outlying areas of Zibqin and Jibal al-Butm in Tyre district came under Israeli artillery fire.

At 0100 hours a Palestinian was wounded when an Israeli helicopter strafed an outlying area of Jibal al-Butm.

23 February 1998

At 1240 hours Israeli warplanes flew over the South at high altitudes.

At 1725 hours Israeli forces and the militia of the client Lahad fired a number of mortar shells that fell along the Nab' al-Tasah and in the vicinity of Mazra'at Uqmata.

At 1850 hours two Israeli helicopters flew over the Tyre and Tibnin areas and over the sea at different altitudes.

24 February 1998

At 0345 hours an Israeli helicopter fired a missile at a civilian vehicle travelling along a secondary road in Majdal Silm.

At 1140 hours the militia of the client Lahad strafed areas around its position on Anan hill with medium-weapons fire.

At 1320 hours Israeli forces fired three shells at Jabal Ayn al-Tinah from their position in Tumat Jazzin.

At 1320 hours the militia of the client Lahad fired a number of artillery shells from its position in Zafatah. They fell in outlying areas of Jba' and Mazra'at Kafra.

At 1330 hours the militia of the client Lahad fired a number of artillery shells from its position in Zafatah. They fell in outlying areas of Jba' and Mazra'at Kafra.

At 1605 hours the militia of the client Lahad prevented the inhabitants of Hula, Mays al-Jabal, Blida and Aytrun from going out to the liberated areas.

At 2035 hours an Israeli reconnaissance aircraft overflew the Tyre area at high altitude.

At 2130 hours an Israeli gunboat at sea off Qulaylah fired a number of medium-weapons bursts in various directions.

25 February 1998

At 1125 hours Israeli reconnaissance aircraft flew over the South at high altitudes.

At 1205 hours Israeli and Lahad militia forces fired a number of artillery shells from their positions in Shuray'ah, Ksarat al-Arus, Tall Ya'qub, Tall Sujud and Jabal Balat at Mazra'at Uqmata, Wadi Basil and areas along the Nab' al-Tasah.

At 1335 hours Israeli warplanes overflew Jabal Bir al-Dahr.

At 1845 hours an Israeli gunboat at sea off Mansuri fired a number of bursts.

At 2115 hours an Israeli reconnaissance aircraft overflew the Tyre area at high altitude.

At 2145 hours an Israeli reconnaissance aircraft overflew the Tyre area at high altitude.

At 0100 hours the Lahad militia fired a mortar shell from Sujud hill. It fell on Jabal Safi.

26 February 1998

At 0115 hours Israeli forces fired a number of mortar shells from their position in Ksarat al-Arus. They fell in Mazra'at Uqmata.

At 0150 hours occupation forces fired a number of illumination flares from their position in Qal'at al-Shaqif (Chateau de Beaufort) over areas along the Litani River towards Zawtar al-Gharbiyah.

At 0500 hours an Israeli gunboat at sea off Mansuri fired a number of bursts.

At 0615 hours occupation forces and the militia of the client Lahad on Dabshah hill fired a number of shells. They fell on the abandoned Lebanese Army barracks in Nabatiyah.

At 0740 hours occupation forces at Abu Qamhah fired 16 artillery shells towards Jabal Bir al-Dahr.

At 1640 hours occupation forces and the militia of the client Lahad fired a number of artillery shells and bursts of fire from other weapons from their positions at Tall Ya'qub, Jabal Balat and Ksarat al-Arus and on Sujud hill at

outlying areas of Yatar, Jibal al-Butm, Majdal Zun, Mansuri, Izziyah, Zibqin, Jarju', Arabsalim and Humin al-Fawqa, areas along the Nab' al-Tasah, Jabal al-Rafi' and areas around Sujud hill.

At 1935 hours the militia of the client Lahad strafed the areas around its position at Dahr al-Mashnaqah with medium-weapons fire.

At 2110 hours an Israeli reconnaissance aircraft overflew the Tyre area at high altitude.

At 2215 hours elements from the militia of the client Lahad on Anan hill threw hand-grenades into the surrounding area.

At 2250 hours Israeli warplanes overflew the Tyre area at high altitude.

27 February 1998

At 0300 hours the militia of the client Lahad strafed the area around its position on Rum hill with medium-weapons fire.

At 0400 hours an Israeli gunboat at sea off Qulaylah fired a number of bursts in various directions.

At 1620 hours enemy forces and the militia of the client Lahad fired a number of mortar shells from their positions in Ksarat al-Arus and on Sujud hill. They fell on Mazra'at Uqmata.

28 February 1998

At 0650 hours the Lahad militia fired a number of shells and bursts of machine-gun fire from its position on Rum hill towards Mu'aytah.

At 0740 hours enemy forces fired a number of bursts of medium-weapons fire from their position on Dabshah hill at the abandoned Lebanese Army barracks in Nabatiyah.

At 0755 hours Israeli forces fired a number of artillery shells from Abu Qamhah towards the Iqlim al-Tuffah area.

At 0955 hours the Lahad militia fired a number of shells from Razlan hill and Shaqif. They fell on Jabal Safi.

At 1335 hours the militia of the client Lahad fired some bursts towards Wadi Mimis from its position in Ayn Qinya.

The Lebanese Government strongly condemns the continued Israeli occupation and the fresh attacks and arbitrary practices against the civilian Lebanese population that have left a number of wounded and caused further serious damage to property.

Like previous attacks, this new series is in flagrant violation of the sovereignty and independence of Lebanon and constitutes a breach of the purposes

and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, of international law and of basic human rights.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 37, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Samir MOUBARAK
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

UNITED NATIONS **A S**

General Assembly
Security Council

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17 March 1998

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GENERAL ASSEMBLY
Fifty-second session
Agenda item 61
QUESTION OF CYPRUS

SECURITY COUNCIL
Fifty-third year

Letter dated 13 March 1998 from the Permanent Representative of Turkey to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith a letter dated 13 March 1998, addressed to you by His Excellency Mr. Aytuğ Plümer, Representative of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus.

I should be grateful if the text of the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 61, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Hüseyin E. ÇELEM
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

ANNEX

Letter dated 13 March 1998 from Mr. Aytuğ Plümer addressed to the Secretary-General

Upon instructions from my Government, I have the honour to refer to the letter dated 26 February 1998 addressed to you by the Greek Cypriot representative at the United Nations (A/52/808-S/1998/173), which contains unfounded allegations regarding cultural property in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus.

The Greek Cypriot representative once again refers to the TRNC as an "occupied area". I wish to underline that the only occupation in Cyprus is the 35-year-old usurpation and occupation of the seat of government of the once bi-communal Republic of Cyprus by the Greek Cypriot regime in the South.

Allegations on the so-called "destruction of the cultural identity" of Northern Cyprus have been amply dealt with in our previous communications addressed to Your Excellency, most recently in my letter dated 3 March 1998. Suffice it to say that it is the Greek Cypriot side that has always tried to wipe out the Turkish-Muslim heritage of Cyprus, in particular during the years between 1963 and 1974 when, in the process of a systematic campaign of ethnic cleansing directed against the Turkish Cypriot people, mosques, shrines and other places of Muslim worship in 103 villages across the island were dest oyed. Today, the Greek Cypriot administration is still perpetuating a policy of religious intolerance and showing undisguised contempt towards the Islamic heritage in South Cyprus. At the same time, the Greek Cypriot side is doing its utmost to hamper the efforts of the TRNC authorities to secure financial and technical assistance from international organizations which would contribute towards the preservation of the antiquities and the cultural heritage of Northern Cyprus.

The Greek Cypriot representative specifically makes allegations in his letter concerning the Armenian monastery of St. Makar in the TRNC. These allegations are totally unfounded and are designed to mislead world public opinion on the state of historic sites in Northern Cyprus and the ongoing preservation efforts. Firstly, there are no plans for the conversion of the said monastery into a hotel. Secondly, it should be pointed out that if indeed there had been plans to put the monastery into everyday use, this would be in accordance with the relevant international instruments under which the conservation of historical buildings through use is not only permissible but also recommended. The TRNC Department of Antiquities and Museums has plans for the restoration of the Armenian monastery of St. Makar through a project involving a private institution with expertise in this field.

It is evident, therefore, that the Greek Cypriot allegations concerning the monastery of St. Makar in particular, and the cultural heritage of Northern Cyprus in general, are baseless and politically motivated. Our relevant authorities are working assiduously at the task of preserving the cultural heritage of Northern Cyprus. The Greek Cypriot side should be strongly urged by

all concerned to cease all efforts to exploit the issue as a propaganda device, while the blocking the provision of aid to the TRNC authorities for the upkeep of cultural property.

I should be grateful if the text of the present letter could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 61, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Aytuğ PLÜMER
Representative
Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus

UNITED NATIONS **A**

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13 March 1998

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Fifty-second session
Agenda item 97 (a)

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC COOPERATION: RENEWAL OF THE DIALOGUE ON STRENGTHENING INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC COOPERATION FOR DEVELOPMENT THROUGH PARTNERSHIP

Letter dated 13 March 1998 from the Chairman of the Second Committee to the President of the General Assembly

With reference to your letter of 18 November 1997 (A/C.2/52/10) requesting me to undertake, on your behalf, consultations with Member States on the date, modalities and focus of the first two-day high-level dialogue on the theme of the social and economic impact of globalization and interdependence and their policy implications, I have the honour to report to you hereby the results of the consultations held this week.

With respect to the timing, taking into consideration that this event has already been postponed several times, delegations felt that the most appropriate time for the first high-level dialogue should be immediately before the commencement of the general debate at the fifty-third session of the General Assembly, that is, on 17 and 18 September 1998.

With regard to the desired modalities, delegations considered that, in order to stimulate high-level interest and ensure interactive dialogue, a combination of plenary meetings and ministerial round tables would be the best approach to follow.

Delegates also felt that, in order to stimulate the high-level interest in the meeting and to benefit from the widest possible range of inputs, contributions of non-State actors involved in, and affected by, globalization should be sought. Thus, the official intergovernmental dialogue could be complemented by informal panel meetings, with the participation of non-State actors, which would be held in conjunction with (but not as an official part of) the dialogue. In making such arrangements, it should be ensured that there is balanced representation.

Thus, on the first day there would be an opening plenary meeting, to be held from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., in which participation of the Secretary-General and spokesmen of the major groups, among others, would be expected. In the afternoon, the first informal panel meeting could be scheduled for the first part of the afternoon, from 2 to 4 p.m., followed by a continuation of the morning plenary meeting, from 4 to 7 p.m.

On the second day of the dialogue, a second informal panel meeting would be held from 9 to 11 a.m., followed by the first ministerial round table, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. In the afternoon, there would be a second ministerial round table between 3 and 5 p.m., followed by a closing plenary meeting, from 5 to 7 p.m.

At the closing plenary meeting, rapporteurs designated for each of the ministerial round tables would present their summary reports, and all minister participants would be expected to join in a final, interactive discussion. At the end, a President's summary would be issued.

The specific focus for the ministerial round tables and the informal panels should be selected later, based on further consultations, and drawn from both the economic and social aspects of the impact of globalization.

Delegations were of the view that arrangements for this dialogue were without prejudice to arrangements for subsequent dialogues, which would need to be reviewed and built upon based on the lessons learned in the present dialogue. In this context, more thorough preparatory processes and a "bottom-up" approach, inter alia, could be considered.

Delegations were confident that further organizational details of this high-level dialogue would be wisely and appropriately pursued by you, with the support of the Secretariat, after wide and continued consultation with Governments, so as to arrive at early decisions thereon. I and other members of the Second Committee remain at your service for anything further in which we may be of assistance.

I ask that you have this letter distributed as a document of the fifty-second session of the General Assembly in connection with agenda item 97 (a).

(Signed) Oscar R. de ROJAS
Ambassador
Deputy Permanent Representative of Venezuela
Chairman of the Second Committee